



IRON RANGERS

COMMANDER'S LETTER

(14 June 2004)

Greetings from Forward Operations Base (FOB) in Iraq

Introduction

Iron Rangers have supported Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) for nearly 10 months. I want to update you about what your husbands, fathers, brothers, and sons have accomplished during our deployment.

Combat Operations

The Soldiers of Bushmaster/BM, Bounty Hunter/BH, Coyote/CY, Rhino/RH, and Crossbow/CB have performed their duty to our nation far above my wildest expectations. Their performance over the last 10 months has simply been courageous, relentless, professional, and heroic. The Iron Rangers have conducted over 2,700 combat patrols, 684 convoys and IO (information operations) missions, 31 deliberate raids, and 2 highly complex task force/battalion movements to contact which resulted in the break up of a major IED (improvised explosive device) cell.

Currently, the Soldiers of BM, BH, CY, RH, and CB are conducting route security on the main supply route (MSR) linking Baghdad and all of western Iraq. Their performance has been without equal. For the over 55 days we've been on MSR patrol, we have deterred Anti-Iraqi Forces (AIF) so that not a single IED has gone off in our 60 kilometer (36 mile) stretch of roadway where 7 had gone off in the few days prior to the Iron Rangers assuming this mission. The results – the free and safe flow of Iraqi civilian and Coalition military traffic. Though we have been given additional brigade areas to secure, so the brigade can free up other units, we have taken up this burden and carried it proudly. We are now responsible for over 4,260 square kilometers of the Devil Brigade's area of operation (AO), more than any other Devil Brigade battalion.

Despite daily temperatures of over 110F, the diligence, dedication, and determination of our Soldiers has not waned, but has maintained its steel. I am extremely proud of our Iron Rangers, as I'm sure you are too.

Building Iraqi Security Forces

One day the Coalition will leave Iraq, but before it does, the Iron Rangers have committed themselves to leaving institutions and systems in place to secure the country and support the government. I speak of the ING (Iraqi National Guard), the IPs (Iraqi Police), and the HPs (the Highway Patrol). Since the first weeks of our deployment to OIF, Iron Ranger Soldiers have worked with these institutions to foster professional, self-sufficient, and self-confident forces capable of securing their countrymen and supporting a democratic Iraqi Government.

From its inception, Iron Rangers Soldiers stood up, equipped, fed, uniformed, paid, trained (both line units and staff), and mentored the Soldiers and leaders of a ING Battalion. The results have been nothing short of transformational. Now the ING battalion that we stood up conducts infrastructure security, black market fuel interdiction, Al Anbar government building security, boat operations on islands in the Euphrates to search for weapons caches, and security for Al Anbar provincial council meetings (a critical target for AIF).

Furthermore, to build local security forces, Iron Rangers Soldiers have trained, resourced, and conducted joint operations with the IPs (particularly the Al Jazeera Police Station) and HPs (particularly the HP station along our MSR). To build the confidence and abilities of the IP and HP forces, we have conducted joint patrols, raids, and cordon & searches.

All our training and work with Iraqi security forces will culminate in the turning over of security responsibilities to the ING, the IPs, and the HPs come 1JULY04. Together we have built the foundation of competence and professionalism which Iraqi security forces will build on to secure the future of the Iraqi people.

Rebuilding Iraq/CMO (Civilian-Military Operations)

With a vision of establishing a free, prosperous, peaceful, and self-sufficient Iraq, Iron Ranger Soldiers have not only built Iraqi security forces, but have also supervised the spending of millions of dollars to build vital infrastructure. Our labors have had an immeasurably positive impact on the lives of the Iraqi population in our sector.

To date, Iron Rangers have contracted \$8,154,000 in civil projects (injecting currency into the Iraqi economy) that includes the renovation of 57 schools, 3 health clinics, 2 police stations, 13 water treatment plants, and the construction of 4 additional water treatment plants. These funds have also provided for the major upgrading of a water pumping station that once served only Saddam Hussein's resort palace near the Thar Thar Dam. Now this pumping station, instead of serving one man and his select elite, will provide potable water to 50,000 Iraqi people who have never had drinkable water and

have instead taken drinking water from irrigation canals. These projects have been spread judiciously across 16 tribal populations. They have improved the education infrastructure for more than 28,000 Iraqi children and provided clean water, improving the health and quality of life for at least 100,000 poor rural Iraqis.

This effort to assist in the building of infrastructure has also succeeded in building relationships with the local leaders and citizens of our sector. Going out into the local communities, Iron Ranger company commanders and platoon leaders have become intimately familiar with the populations of their Area of Operations and the particular needs and concerns of these populations. Consequently, this Iron Ranger effort has led to the establishment of community barriers against anti-coalition activity. Through our earnest commitment (and obvious results) to rebuilding Iraq and our commanders' and platoon leaders' intense and sincere commitment to building relationships, the level of violence in Iron Ranger's Area of Operations has been far lower than what has been seen elsewhere in Iraq.

Iron Ranger's civil-military operations have given credibility to the notion that the Coalition is here to help build a better Iraq, by the Iraqi people, for the Iraqi people.

Life At The “Other” Junction City

When the Iron Rangers are not conducting combat operations or CMO, we live in a section of FOB Junction City called Camp Lindsey (named after a Iron Rangers Medal of Honor recipient). When we arrived here in SEP03, there were only destroyed buildings. Out of this rubble, the Iron Rangers built the best battalion area on FOB Junction City. As a result of the untiring efforts of many Iron Ranger leaders, we now live in renovated barracks and sleep on beds with mattresses. We have showers and local, daily trash and latrine services. To relax and unwind, we've built from scratch a large weight room and an Internet café/library so the Iron Rangers can keep in touch with their families and friends. In addition, from a building that was a derelict skeleton, we built the Iron Ranger club, Machine Gun Joe's. Machine Gun Joe's provides our Soldiers with darts, foosball, ping-pong, pool tables, movies, cable television, and karaoke. All 3 of these facilities are open to the Iron Rangers 24 hours a day. What's more, outside, we have a basketball and volleyball court as well as several horseshoe lanes.

Iron Ranger Family/FRG (Family Readiness Group)

On paper and here on the ground, I have 5 companies carrying out our mission: Bushmaster, Bounty Hunter, Coyote, Rhino, and Crossbow (and our Attack Company doing great things for TF Centurion). But in reality, I have a 7th Iron Ranger company – YOU. You - our wives, our children, our brothers, our sisters, our mothers, and our fathers - have done us proud. I could not possibly be prouder of my 7th company. Our FRG Company has been priceless. Just as the 5 companies of TF Iron Ranger (and my Attack Company) have secured the Iraqi front, you, our 7th company, have magnificently secured the homefront. On behalf of CSM Leggette and myself, I am eternally grateful for your tireless and selfless service and devotion supporting us here and each other back home. My pledge to you is this – the moment I receive confirmed information/dates

about our re-deployment, I will share this information with all 7 of my TF Iron Ranger companies.

Finally, let us remember our fallen brothers, our fallen heroes: SGT Jarrod Black, SFC Gary Collins, SSG Joe Dunigan, SPC Christopher Hill, SPC Joseph Lister, SGT Christopher Ramirez, CPT John Tipton, SSG Mark Vasquez, and SGT Ryan Young. When I think of them, it reminds me of a letter President Lincoln wrote on the devastation of such a tremendous loss.

**Executive Mansion,
Washington,
November 21, 1864.**

**Mrs. Bixby,
Boston, Massachusetts:**

DEAR MADAM: I have been shown in the files of the War Department a statement of the Adjutant-General of Massachusetts that you are the mother of five sons who have died gloriously on the field of battle. I feel how weak and fruitless must be any words of mine which should attempt to beguile you from the grief of a loss so overwhelming. But I cannot refrain from tendering to you the consolation that may be found in the thanks of the Republic they died to save. I pray that our Heavenly Father may assuage the anguish of your bereavement, and leave you only the cherished memory of the loved and lost, and the solemn pride that must be yours to have laid so costly a sacrifice upon the altar of freedom.

Yours very sincerely and respectfully,

Abraham Lincoln.

We will always remember you. We will never forget.

May the Almighty continue to bless and protect the Iron Ranger Family.

Always Ready!

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LTC Thomas S. Hollis